

**NEWPORT SCHOOL COMMITTEE**  
Special School Committee Meeting  
June 28, 2018, 5:00 PM

**MINUTES**

**1.0 Opening Items**

**1.1 Call to Order:** School Committee Chairperson, David C. Hanos, Jr. , called the School Committee meeting to order at 5:00 PM, at the Newport Public Schools' Administration Center, in Room 924, 109 Old Fort Road, Newport, Rhode Island 02840.

**1.2 Roll Call:** Attendance was as follows: School Committee Members – David C. Hanos, Jr., Raymond E. Gomes, Rebecca Bolan, David R. Carlin III, Sandra J. Flowers, Ph.D., Jo Eva Gaines, and Kathleen Silvia.  
School Department – Superintendent Colleen Burns Jermain, Legal Counsel Neil Galvin.

**2.0 Public Comment:** None.

**3.0 Action Items:**

**3.1 Personnel Actions – Thompson Middle School Principal**

Superintendent Jermain recommended Laurie Sullivan for the position of TMS Principal. Mrs. Gaines made a motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Laurie Sullivan, seconded by Dr. Flowers. This appointment is contingent upon a one year probationary period. Mrs. Bolan will vote against because she feels that the funding has not yet been satisfactorily addressed. Attorney Galvin suggested appointment be subject to a mutually agreed upon contract and the contract would be brought to the Committee for approval at the next meeting.

Mrs. Gaines requested to amend her motion, seconded by Mrs. Silvia (7-0).

Mrs. Gaines made a motion to approve the appointment of Ms. Sullivan, subject to a mutually acceptable contract with a one year probationary period. The amended motion was seconded by Mrs. Silvia and passed (5-2) with Mr. Carlin and Mrs. Bolan opposed.

**4.0 Executive Session:**

**4.1**

Superintendent Jermain requested her evaluation be held in public session. The only item open to the public at this time is the superintendent's contract and job performance 4.2(1).

Mr. Hanos opened with statement asking for discussion in Executive Session where maybe someone would not want to say something directly and to protect something from being said. The Superintendent has the right by contract to be present. Attorney Galvin advised that the contract language is tempered by request of NSC but if job performance is being discussed then employee has a right to request open session and is statutorily entitled to have discussion held in open session.

Mr. Hanos stated that his evaluation was very critical of the superintendent – communication with parents and himself as the NSC Chair. He wonders if communication is purposeful or if because “she knows that there are 4 people in her corner”. He elaborated on job performance and his dissatisfaction; issues with the business office, unprofessional staff in the past who reported directly to the Superintendent, turnover in the business office; inability to “get a straight answer on the budget”, transportation or why the district is paying for extra busses. Mr. Hanos does not believe that Dr. Colley only found out two weeks before the end of the fiscal year of the budget situation. Mr. Hanos shared that he had skipped the last budget meeting to “take a time out”. He shared a recent meeting between himself, Superintendent Jermain, City Finance Director, Dr. Colley and Vice Chair Gomes and stated that he asked the Superintendent to speak only when spoken to.

Additional concerns were related to retiree life insurance, requests for meetings on the RHS schedule, TMS parents being given assurances on accelerated classes for all students. Mr. Hanos stated that he is critical but gives the Superintendent credit when credit is due; she brings money into the district. He does not like answers he has received from many administrators and believes that “everyone tows the company line” and will not answer questions.

Dr. Flowers refuted that there are “four people in her corner”. The statement implies that there are already “done deals” and that is not the case.

Mrs. Bolan commented that she believes morale is low. There are more grievances and she stated that the City is very concerned about the budget deficit. The structural deficit is scary.

Mrs. Gaines has been on the Committee since 2001 and there have been seven different people in the business office which led to mistrust; there was a morale problem before Superintendent Jermain arrived. The current budget issue was bound to happen but the district is now in a position to resolve it and we have resources and cooperation from the City. Everyone is working together now and does not believe that this Superintendent is to blame.

Mrs. Silvia stated that the School Committee is not without blame. Discussion followed regarding the transportation contract and accountability. Going forward, Mrs. Silvia suggested fiscal impact statements be provided. Dr. Flowers asked Attorney Galvin regarding additional busses being added to the contract. He stated that it was fairly clear in November 2016 that the understanding was that there would be no additional cost to the district.

Mr. Carlin does not believe that the budget situation was only discovered 12 days ago. He asked about the surplus and reported that he was given a different answer every month. Other concerns related to the change to academic standards at TMS and last summer, the bus schedule changes and communications around school start and end times. He agrees with Mrs. Bolan regarding grievances and morale.

Mr. Gomes had no comment at this time.

Superintendent Jermain stated that she believes how we treat each other and speak to each other is important; work environment is important. She disagrees greatly about morale being low. Upon her entry to the district there was a \$600,000 deficit and structural implications. There were very tough negotiations and the School Committee wanted to stop recurring non-sustainable costs. Arbitration or mediation almost always sided with the contract and she started to build positive relationships.

Regarding facilities, the shared service relationship is very positive and Mr. Harrop works as best as possible to do both jobs (city and school) and reports to Superintendent Jermain on all school matters. Superintendent Jermain also stated that she does not micromanage building principals and expects that building principals and their staffs are able to handle situations such as replacing the flag, facilities maintenance and upkeep, day to day activities, and that everyone needs to “remain in their lanes”.

When the budget information came to light, the Superintendent alerted the Chair immediately. Dr. Colley requested to meet with the City Finance Director to gain understanding of the payroll process. Change is difficult and moving payroll to the City makes it more transparent; they have been very helpful. The Superintendent was also charged to “fix” TMS and get high ability classes back in the schools, after an attempt to get rid of tracking upset some parents, that is being completed. Training has happened on ways to share information. Communication is updated weekly and sometimes on a daily basis to the Chair and the Committee.

She summarized by stating that how we as adults behave is important; others see what we are doing and how we conduct ourselves. The time it is taking to complete appointments is impacting leadership and the business of the district. She would like to implement a system which is fair for all school leaders across the board and believes that if administrators leave the district it will be because of money- something that she has raised several times.

Mr. Hanos stated that finance director at the time said the life insurance was against the law and practices need to be updated. There also needs to be a proposal for salaries for administrators, especially in light of the fact that one high ranking administrator has given notice. He had to ask Attorney Galvin to come to a meeting with the Superintendent to check facts about a recommended appointment, as he did not believe the Superintendents responses to his questions and wanted to speak directly with the HR director.

Superintendent Jermain stated that at the meeting with the Chair and school committee lawyer, the individual that was to provide answers to the questions the Chair wanted to investigate was never invited into the room. She further clarified that the law related to life insurance he spoke of changed in 1989. This has been an ongoing issue that was found by this Administration, addressed, and all retirees were refunded and are now paying the appropriate rates. The district is moving forward with facilities projects, fencing, security cameras, STAR scores, graduation rate improvements, and prompt response to complaints.

A full administrative team has been in place since February 2018 for the first time since she arrived. We now see a true, transparent budget, work with the City, and retiree benefit costs have been reduced.

Mr. Gomes agreed with the Chair that the communication to TMS parents, administrators and teachers was not the same. Mr. Carlin disagrees that things are better. He does not believe the majority of the committee will support the Superintendent.

Mr. Carlin left the meeting and a recess was called at 7 PM. The meeting resumed at 7:09 PM. Mr. Hanos stated that this portion of the meeting is concluded. Superintendent Jermain stated that it was important to hold this discussion in public and she has nothing to hide. She will continue to work for students, staff and all at Newport Public Schools.

At 7:10 PM, Mrs. Silvia made a motion to enter into Executive Session Under Jurisdiction of Rhode Island State Law, Chapter 46, 42-46-5 – Exceptions (a)(1) any discussions of the job performance, character, or physical or mental health of a person or persons provided that such person or persons affected have been notified in advance in writing and advised that they may require that the discussion be held at an open meeting; and (a)(2) sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation, or work sessions pertaining to collective bargaining or litigation. The motion was seconded by Dr. Flowers and passed 6-0.

**4.2 (1) Superintendent contract and job performance – held in Open Session.**

**(2) appeal of recent RIDE decision**

**(3) TAN memo on teacher appeal**

**4.3 Vote Regarding Disclosure of Votes and Disposition of Minutes**

**4.4 Adjourn Executive Session**

**5.0 Return to Open Session:**


**5.1 Disclosure of Executive Session Votes and Disposition of Minutes:** Mrs. Silvia reported that no votes were taken and the minutes were sealed.

**6.0 Adjournment:**

At 7:34 PM Mrs. Silvia made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Dr. Flowers. The motion passed (6-0).

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David C. Hanos, Jr.  
Chairperson



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Colleen Burns Jermain  
Clerk